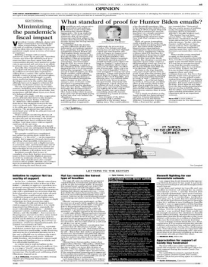




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Get behind teen driver safety initiatives

National Teen Driver Safety Week was October 18-24.

Beginning drivers occasionally make behind-the-wheel mistakes. Some can be easily corrected. Others result in crashes with property damage, injury, even death. The Illinois Insurance Association, a property-casualty trade organization, encourages parents, families, and local communities to get behind teen driver safety initiatives. Some ideas to consider:

Support state graduated driver license laws and adopt house rules to protect teen motorists. Illinois' GDL gives teens more supervised time behind the wheel, bans hand-held mobile devices while driving, limits passengers, restricts night driving, and more. These measures have reduced teen driving fatalities, but laws are only part of the answer. Candid, open, and ongoing family discussions about driving safety, expectations, and responsibilities are equally important.

Model and reinforce good driving habits. Obey traffic laws; never drink and drive; always wear a seatbelt; routinely scan the roadway for unexpected situations. Avoid distractions that take eyes, hands, or focus away from the task at hand. Cell phones are one example. Music settings, temperature controls, mapping, food, passengers, even scenery are others.

Choose the right vehicle for your teen driver. A bigger, heavier car, truck, or SUV equipped with safety features is best. Avoid those with high horsepower engines, and always check NHTSA safety ratings.

Fatal teen crashes are devastating. Family members, friends, and entire communities are forever affected. We can help young motorists reach destinations intact and improve roadway safety for everyone by taking time to talk to teens about safe driving practices.

— **Kevin J. Martin**, executive director,
 Illinois Insurance Association, Springfield